



N° 43. Friday, May 5, 1727.

— prodigus Æris.

Hor.

To CALEB D'ANVERS, Esq;

SIR,

HE Mind of Man being naturally subject to Pride, Vanity and Ambition, it makes us all eager in the Pursuit of Honours, Titles and Distinctions of Preheminence, either in Drefs or Appellation. For this Reason a Mono-syllable prefixed to a Man's christian Name ; a Medal hung about his Neck ; or a Piece of colour'd Ribband tross his Shoulders, are esteemed of great Value ; and by some Persons preferred even to Riches or Power ; and, however trifling such Ornaments, Badges or Titles may seem in the Eyes of a morose Cynick, or an abstracted Philosopher ; yet, when justly bestowed, they are certainly very useful, expedient and necessary for the Encouragement of Virtue, Patriotism, Fortitude and Merit of all kinds. But as there are different Passions, Appetites and Inclinations peculiar to almost every Nation ; so I have observed that the Generality of *true-born Englishmen* are remarkably fond of the Title of Esquire ; which, beyond all other honourable Appellations, seems peculiarly adapted to the prevailing Humour and Genius of this Kingdom. For tho' a simple Esquire, considered as a Point of Heraldry or Precedence, is but one Remove above the Degree of a common Gentleman ; yet I have known seve-



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several Persons decline Titles of much higher Rank and Distinction, rather than suffer themselves to be *dis-esquired*; and others, who have submitted to it, with great Reluctance, and after much Importunity, in order to carry on some private End, or to gratify a different Species of Ambition. Nay, some Men have discovered such a Passion for this Dignity, that they have retained the Spirit of it, long after they have parted with the Name; from whence it comes to pass, that 'Squire-Knights, 'Squire-Lords and 'Squire-Dukes are no Rarities in this Country.

There is, indeed, something grand, noble and captivating in the very Name and Sound of *Esquire*; which is a popular Appellation, and carries along with it an Idea of *Liberality* and *Munificence*; insomuch that a Man, who makes his Friend welcome at home, or entertains him abroad, is proverbially call'd the '*Squire of the Company*'.

I cannot pretend, after all my Researches, fully to ascertain the Origin and Foundation of this Saying; but I presume it might take its Rise from those antient Times of Hospitality, when it was the Fashion for Gentlemen of plentiful Fortunes to live chiefly in the Country; to keep open House; and spend the superfluous Part of their Estates in *Beef, Pudding and Strong Beer*, for the Entertainment of Tenants, Neighbours and Travellers; which is now indeed more politely bestow'd upon Operas, Masquerades and Bassett-tables; upon costly fine Cloaths; luxurious living; and the extravagant Diversions of the Town.

As this Method of Life was generally follow'd and kept up by that Order of Men, who were dignify'd with the Denomination of *Esquires*; (*Knights, Baro-nets and Peers*, of all Degrees, not being half so common in those Times, as they are at present) it naturally pro-cured them the Love of their Neighbourhood, and endear'd their Order to all the inferiour Part of their Fellow-subjects.

But as the best Things in the World are subject to Abuse, and all Men are fond of *Popularity* and *Preeminence* in their different Stations; so the Credit of this Dignity has produced, in Proces of Time, a Multitude of undeserving Pretenders to it; who have prostituted the Honour of *Esquireship* in a most shameful and scandalous Manner, to the great Grief of Those, who justly claim and worthily bear that ancient Appellation.

To say the Truth, Mr. *D'Anvers*, we seem to have civilized our selves too far, and carried our *Good-breding* to an unwarrantable Excess, by confounding all Degrees of Persons and breaking through the most essential Rules of *Heraldry*; for as all the Women in Town are now grown *Ladies* and *Madams*; not excepting even the lowest Scullion-maids, Oysterwomen and Cinder-wenches; so every rakish young Fellow, as soon as he has clapt on a Spit by his Side and pick'd up a parcel of scoundrel, spunging Companions, immediately sets up for an *Esquire*, and faulcily ranks himself amongst us.

It must be confess'd indeed that ours is a *military Order*; for which Reason we are call'd in Latin *Armigeri*; but though, for want of a sumptuary Law, every Man is allow'd to wear a Sword, who will be at the Expence of it, and to live in what Manner he pleases; there ought certainly to be some other Qualification required of every one, who dubs himself with this Title, besides a *spendthrift Disposition* and a paltry Piece of cold Iron.

Methinks, therefore, it would be a Task well-worthy of our laborious Friend and Brother *John Anpis*, Esquire, that Mirror of our Order, to take this Affair into Consideration, and rescue his Fraternity from the Contempt, into which it hath lately fallen, by the Incroachments of worthless Upstarts and wretched Pretenders.

I heartily wish to see this Matter well regulated ; because, as Things stand at present, those Men, generally speaking, take upon themselves this Character, who have no Title to it, nor any Thing to support it ; whilst several others, who have both, live in a Manner, which does not become Men of such illustrious Distinction.

How many pretty Fellows and fine Gentlemen do we every Day see in this Town, who waste their Substance in the most riotous, dissolute and extravagant Manner, out of the vain Affectation of *Popularity* and the Pride of being at the *Head of their Company* ; which, for this Reason, is generally composed of low, vulgar Sycophants, who repay their Patrons with this favourite Title and a daily Tribute of Flattery and Adulation ?

Nay, this vain Humour is not confined even to such Men ; but hath mixed itself with the common Mass, and corrupted even the lowest of the People. We have *Esquire-Lacqueys*, *Coblers* and *Tinkers* in Abundance ; nor is it any uncommon Thing to see a jolly, roaring Sailor, who hath been sweltering two or three Years in the *West-Indies*, or freezing perhaps as many in the *Baltick*, where he has gone through all manner of Hardships, Dangers and Fatigues, spending the whole Fruit of his Labour upon a fordid Crew of dirty, drunken Parasites ; and at length returning with empty Pockets to the same Drudgery ; fully satisfy'd in his Mind with the Applause, which he had received, and the good Character he hath left behind him.

As we have an Order of Men distinguished by the Title of *Knights of the Industry* ; so I think Those, of whom I have been speaking, may properly be denominated *Esquires of Extravagance* or *Prodigality*. This kind of Vanity is of very fatal and mischievous Consequence in *private Persons* ; but in *political Matters* nothing is more dangerous as well as absurd ; nor can I possibly picture any Thing in my own Imagina-

tion more ominous to this Kingdom, than a publick Minister, who being possessed with such a Spirit, should at any Time, hereafter, endeavour to gratify his own Pride and vain Glory, by making Great-Britain the SQUIRE of Christendom, and lavishly paying the Reckoning of all Europe.

A.

I am, SIR, &c.

ROBERT BRITON, Esq;

To CALEB D'ANVERS, Esq;

SIR,

I Have already troubled you with a Project for preventing CORRUPTION, by fixing a Knot of Ribbands under the left Ear of all Persons, who shall be known to be guilty of that infamous Practice; and was sorry to find that it should give Offence to any of your Readers. I now send you another Proposal of the same Nature; which, if you are not discouraged by the ill Fate of my first Attempt, I desire you likewise to publish.

I do not pretend, Sir, to claim the Merit of this second Expedient myself; but acknowledge that the Publick is obliged for it to the Author of a late Pamphlet, called *An HONEST SHEME*, &c. (which Title it seems, on many Accounts, to deserve) where They will find the following Passage Page 29.

" — . I wish we had the *Roman Custom*, of giving to every *Law* the *Name* of the *Man*, who was the first Adviser and Promoter of it. Such a Custom would encourage *Patriots* to propose and promote good *Laws*, and would deter *selfish* and *designing* *Men* from proposing bad ones.

I cannot help thinking that this Method would be very serviceable to the Common-wealth, and have a good Effect in the Proposal of such *Laws* as the Riot-

Act; the *Septennial-Act*; the *South Sea-Act*; the *Black-Act*; the *Quarantine-Act*; the *Swearing-Act*; the *Coffee-Act*; the *Pot-Act*; and several others of the like sort. At the same time our *Patriots* would be distinguished to *Posterity* by the Laws they proposed; and I should not doubt to see the *W——lian*, *Horatian*, *R——gian*, and *Sc——pian* Laws make as great a Figure in our Histories, as the *Porcian*, *Ju——lian*, *Fannian* and *Sempronian* Laws of old.

I submit This to your Judgment, and am once more, *S I R,*

Your Humble Servant,

N.

JOHN ENGLISH.

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